



University of Nevada  
Cooperative Extension

# Kids Know Nevada Insects

COMMON NAME:  
MONARCH  
BUTTERFLY

SCIENTIFIC NAME:  
DANAUS PLEXIPPUS  
LINNAEUS

FS-17-14

I am the monarch butterfly! I am found all throughout the United States and even southern Canada. I am most well-known for the yearly trip back and forth (called a migration) that I make every fall and spring.

By Kevin Burls and Joy Newton

PEER  
REVIEWED

Monarchs in Nevada and other western states head to the coast of California, but those in the east head all the way to central Mexico. When we arrive, we hang from trees in big numbers, waiting until spring to head north. We do this to avoid cold weather, returning in spring when the plants we need begin to grow again.

## Why am I important?

Though it is a very large and pretty butterfly, there are many dangers to monarchs. In California and Mexico, houses and farming remove plants the monarch needs for food, and trees the monarch needs to live on during the winter. In Nevada, houses and farms take away milkweed plants the caterpillars need. Because monarchs need milkweed, it is very important to save places that have milkweed plants, and you can help by planting milkweed in your yard to attract monarchs! Scientists have also learned that monarchs can be harmed by pesticides, chemicals that are used to protect plants from being eaten by different types of insects.

## What is my life cycle?

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Egg

Like all butterflies, monarchs start out as small eggs laid under a leaf. Monarchs have to find just the right type of plant - called a milkweed - for the caterpillars to eat. No other plants will do!



## Caterpillar

After the caterpillar hatches from the egg, it eats leaves for three weeks, growing to almost 2 inches long.



## Chrysalis

After growing to full size, the caterpillar turns into a pupa, called a chrysalis, bright-green with gold spots.



## Adult

The monarch adult comes out of the chrysalis after 10 days. As an adult, the monarch looks for milkweed to lay eggs on, repeating the cycle.

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Egg and chrysalis photos by Mark Rainey.  
Caterpillar and adult photos by Kevin Burls.  
Adult feature photo by Master Gardener Becky Colwell.

# Monarch Butterfly Word Search

T	V	P	S	P	C	C	H	R	Y	S	A	L	I	S	C	E	F	O	O	G	Z	B	P	Z
F	I	H	T	A	E	A	S	Q	S	M	K	K	B	M	K	K	O	Z	L	D	M	E	K	X
Z	G	W	K	T	F	T	L	U	D	A	E	N	Z	Y	L	T	Z	I	C	K	S	Z	K	C
C	U	W	O	Q	A	E	D	U	F	A	I	I	G	L	W	W	K	J	D	T	F	N	J	P
A	M	L	H	M	V	R	D	E	E	W	K	L	I	M	C	J	I	O	I	W	E	S	X	I
L	M	E	C	I	K	P	C	Q	Q	H	D	L	D	I	B	A	C	A	X	I	U	K	R	
I	U	M	R	O	W	I	K	O	Z	D	U	F	L	A	K	G	I	B	J	E	A	Z	X	A
F	Y	E	A	E	S	L	A	R	V	A	S	Y	J	E	S	D	R	Q	V	E	L	V	H	I
O	X	C	N	B	Z	L	E	D	L	N	I	P	O	L	E	R	R	A	T	J	N	A	I	S
R	S	L	O	F	Z	A	T	P	L	N	J	Z	X	S	B	M	X	D	T	Y	B	R	R	U
N	B	L	M	L	Y	R	B	L	R	I	H	Z	G	G	X	H	Q	F	P	I	G	A	E	K
I	Y	T	U	U	D	N	L	I	F	E	C	Y	C	L	E	C	V	O	T	D	O	U	R	O
A	M	P	G	I	A	V	P	R	A	I	M	U	C	C	D	J	K	A	F	A	Q	N	O	K
G	T	G	I	H	J	G	P	R	H	M	I	Q	H	H	I	Y	T	L	T	Q	M	K	C	J
N	E	K	A	K	K	X	A	R	Q	P	U	P	E	R	O	P	S	U	I	R	J	T	W	P
K	A	K	V	N	A	H	Y	L	F	R	E	T	T	U	B	Y	K	Y	K	P	Q	F	A	F

- Egg
- Larva
- Caterpillar

- Chrysalis
- Milkweed
- Adult
- Life cycle
- Cold
- Monarch
- Migration
- Habitat
- California
- Pesticides
- Butterfly

Fill in the blanks to complete the paragraph about Monarch butterflies

Have you ever seen a \_\_\_\_\_ butterfly in your yard?

Adult butterflies are the easiest to see, but if you grow \_\_\_\_\_ plants,

look for the yellow- and black-striped \_\_\_\_\_

or the green and gold \_\_\_\_\_.

The orange color of the \_\_\_\_\_ butterfly warns predators that monarch butterflies do not taste very good.

What makes the butterfly taste bad? Milkweed plants have chemicals that the larva stores in their body and that taste yucky to birds and other insects, which might eat the larvae or adults. This helps the adults during \_\_\_\_\_, so they can fly long distances without being eaten.

Where do monarchs in Nevada fly in the fall? \_\_\_\_\_

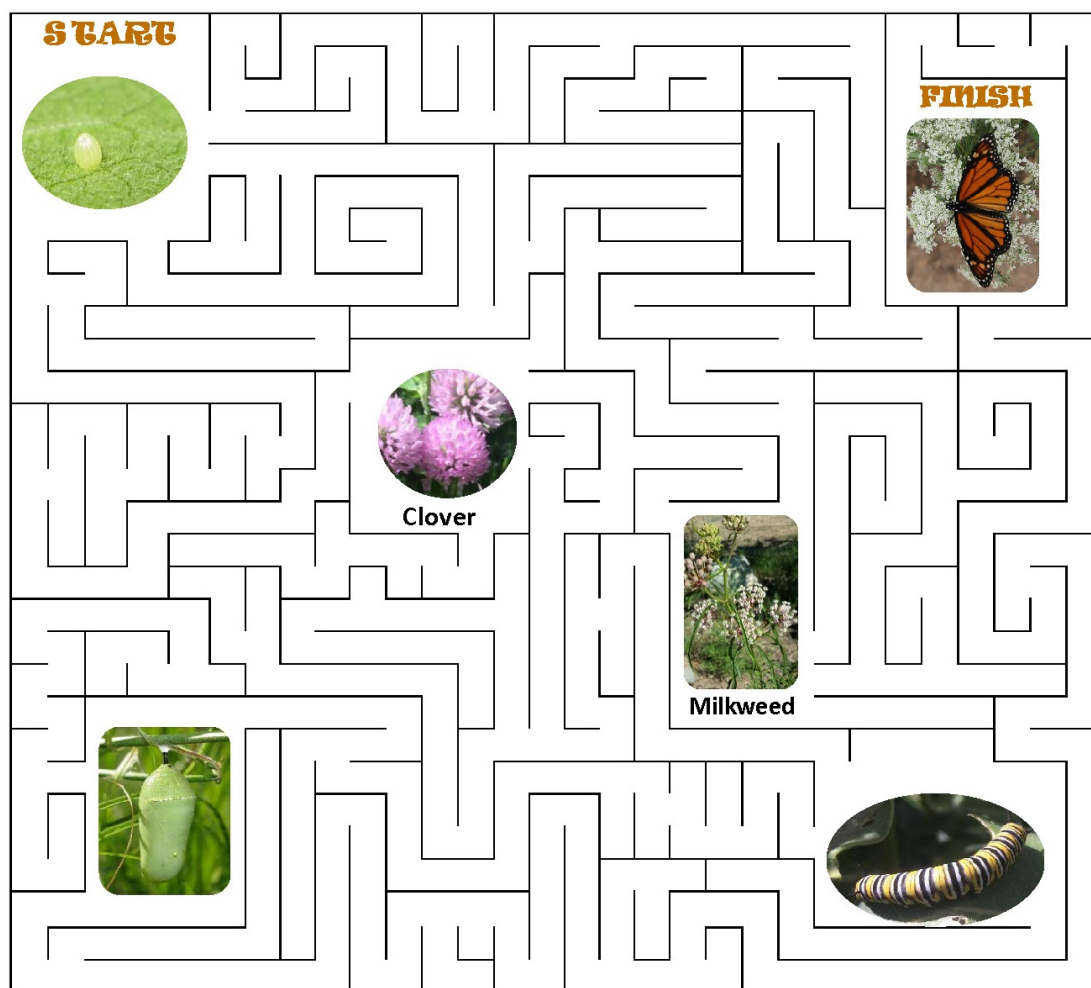
They fly away to avoid \_\_\_\_\_ weather.





# Follow the life cycle from egg to adult

The egg must hatch on the proper host plant, or it will not be able to develop into a butterfly.



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